

ANNOUNCER: Representing the great State of Missouri, please welcome United States Senator Jim Talent.

SENATOR TALENT: Thank you. It's great to be here and let me add a little more explicitly than the mayor did that while conservation is certainly the theme of the day, you don't have to conserve all your wealth as you go around St. Louis. It's great to be here with you and I want to add my welcome to the mayor's.

It's great to have you here in St. Louis and in Missouri. There is no better place, I think, to be holding a conservation conference because conservation is spoken here in Missouri. We understand that. It's been 100 years or almost 100 years since President Roosevelt had the first conservation conference. We can thank him for the vision that he developed and that the nation adopted for our national parks, our national forests and habitat, and it's our job on a regular basis to update and implement an updated vision for those tremendous natural resources.

My message today to you is really to thank you for your commitment, for your concern and for the way that you have shown that by being here today and making a commitment to work on this issue. It's very important that the people who use the land, who know the land the best, our farmers, our sportsmen, are keenly involved in the policy that shapes the use of our nation's natural resources.

I will tell as you as a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, as a member of the Sportsmen Caucus, as a person who's going to be working on these issues from an agriculture and farm bill standpoint that I believe very strongly a policy that is developed without reference to what is actually going on on the ground, no pun intended, a policy that is developed other than in partnership with the people who know the nation's resources, who know the land, who share in their hearts the commitment of conservation and healthy use, a policy that's developed other than in partnership with the kind of people who are at this conference is a policy that deserves to fail and will fail. I think everybody who is going to be speaking to you today on behalf of the government and its agencies believes in that and that's going to be a constant message that you hear through the course of this conference.

We are developing a conservation policy in the Farm Bill. We've had the CRP Program for a number of years. It's a good program. With the last Farm Bill, we took a new step. We opened up a new era with the CSP Program. We have a couple watersheds here in Missouri that

are eligible for that. We've had farmers signing up and there are problems and we have to keep working on it.

That's the whole point of conferences like this.

But it's a new era really in conservation because instead of saying to our farmers and our producers we're going to try conserving by taking land out of production and there was a lot to be said for that program, what we're saying is we're going to conserve by encouraging production in a healthy way, in a way that incentivizes you to continue the efforts you've had historically over the years to product in a way that produces healthy habitat, good areas for wildlife and promotes clean water as well. We stepped over a new line when we created that with the CSP Program and we're all committed to refining it and making it better in the next Farm Bill.

So let me just say to you while there's a great reservoir, I believe, of support for your efforts in Missouri and around the country, a great reservoir of goodwill, a tremendous belief in conservation, in a healthy environment, there's a sense in which we're all conservationists now and we just have to develop and implement that vision in a way that makes sense and we have a responsibility not just to the habitat, not just to the environment, not just to those of you who are most active and engaged every day in the use of the land, but to everybody around America, the millions of families like my family that maybe don't live off the land or live in a very rural setting, but we have kids. We enjoy fishing. We enjoy a little hunting. Someday by the way, I'm going to be able to outfish my 15-year-old. I'm determined to be able to do that. And we have a responsibility to the millions of Americans around the country who care about our habitat, who care about clean water and are looking forward to a future where we have improved the quality of our nation's resources.

Thank you for being here. Welcome. Have a great conference. I appreciate the chance to address you today. Thank you.